

## FIVE MILLION AMERICAN JEWS

*Progress in Demography*

ERICH ROSENTHAL

**D**URING the past decade our knowledge of the demographic structure of the Jewish population in America has considerably expanded. First, and most important of all, we now know as a fact that there are at the present time five million Jews in the United States. Of almost equal importance is our knowledge that the surveys conducted in the past twenty years gave a highly accurate picture of the demographic situation.

These surveys were sponsored by private local and national communal agencies, and carried out by a small group of demographers who had developed rather ingenious techniques for obtaining the desired information in a most economical manner. It is only in the past decade that increasing use has been made of modern sampling techniques. The five million figure for the Jewish population—4,975,000, to be precise—is the result of a sample survey of the total U.S. population which was undertaken by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The same survey found that there were about 110 million Protestants and some 43 million Roman Catholics in the civilian population of the United States as of March 1957.

The publication of this information by the U.S. Bureau of the Census is a truly remarkable event. This is the first time that

such a survey has been undertaken by a governmental agency. Although it was the Census Bureau's first try, and although the answers were obtained on a *voluntary* basis, 99 per cent of the respondents cooperated fully. It was also the first time that the Census Bureau asked respondents directly, "What is your religion?" and ascertained the information in as straightforward a manner as it usually does in the matter of age, sex, marital status, and a host of similar personal and social characteristics. Previously—in the 19th century, and in the decennial *Census of Religious Bodies* of 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936—the Bureau, with the help of special agents, had gathered from religious organizations data on church and synagogue membership, value of church property, indebtedness (mortgages), expenditures for salaries, and size of Sunday school classes. This information was obtained through contact with the officers of local and national religious organizations, and did not involve any personal contact between the population and representatives of the Census Bureau.

At first sight the question, "What is your religion?" appears to be the most obvious means of obtaining information on the subject. However, in the introductory remarks of the Census release we read that "the question did not relate to church membership, attendance at church services or gatherings, or religious belief." While the questionnaire undoubtedly tapped these three major sources of religious affiliation, "many persons," in the words of the Census Bureau, "in addition to those who maintain formal affiliation with a religious organization, associated themselves with such a group and reported its name." In other words, the question elicited a fourth dimension, namely, religious and cultural, or religio-cultural,

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background. Since the Bureau did not ask certain questions concerning the various dimensions of religious behavior, the statement quoted above is merely an inference, a justifiable inference based on available church membership statistics and on the fact that 96 per cent of the survey sample indicated an identification with a religious group. Yet the specific nature of the identification is not spelled out. In the case of the Jewish population, this can mean identification with religion; nationality, culture, or ancestry and family background. In other words, the question, "Who is a Jew?" gets into the way of such a seemingly simple task as counting the Jewish population of the United States.

A fairly valid answer to this question is that a Jew is a person who considers himself to be one, and is treated by others as if he were one. While self-identification does not always coincide with identification by others, it seems (at any rate to this writer) that in cases where there is such a discrepancy, self-identification should be given greater weight. Since the Census Bureau's question was aimed at eliciting the respondents' own view, the validity of the response cannot be questioned.

It may bear repeating that the figure of 4,975,000 for the Jewish population is the result of a *sample* survey. The question naturally arises whether and to what extent the results of sampling in general (and of this survey in particular) can be accepted as accurate. Sampling is a procedure in which from the examination of parts of a whole inferences are drawn about the whole. Considerable progress has been made in this field in the past twenty years under the aegis of the Census Bureau. This agency has been a pioneer in developing sampling methods and has piled up more experience than any other governmental or private body in the United States, with the result that surveys based on sample design have become a matter of everyday routine with the Bureau, as well as a great many other research organizations. The sample survey of religious affiliation was part of the Bureau's monthly sample survey. This "Current Population Survey"

—as it is officially known—goes back to 1942, has been under constant critical observation and revision, and probably owes its meticulousness to the fact that it is primarily devoted to the collection of data on employment and other important aspects of the labor force—data which can also be used as political weapons. In the end, the accuracy of any survey—whether complete census or sample survey—depends on the interviewer's integrity and his ability to collect the desired data. Hence, the results of a well-conducted sample survey may be more accurate than those of a complete census, since in the first instance it is feasible to pay the price necessary to collect a smaller volume of data with a higher degree of accuracy and to cut down the number of refusals. According to the Census Bureau, refusals to cooperate have averaged only a fraction of one per cent since the inception of the monthly surveys, even though they are conducted on a voluntary basis.

ACCORDING to the Census Bureau then, the Jewish population in the United States numbered 4,975,000 in March 1957. The question now arises whether this is a plausible figure and how it compares with what we believed the size of the Jewish community to be before this new figure became available. It may come as a surprise to find that the 1956 issue of the *American Jewish Year Book* (published by the American Jewish Committee) contains a table giving figures for the various states for 1955, but not for the United States as a whole. The omission was intentional, and was meant to emphasize the fact that figures for the states are estimates. It was apparently thought reckless to derive a total from such data. Yet, if one summons up courage and adds the figures up, one obtains a grand total of—lo and behold—4,974,050.

The fact that the Census Bureau figure for the spring of 1957 is within 1,000 of the summer 1955 figure of the *American Jewish Year Book* is not due to chance or luck. Since the middle 30's, Jewish local communities had begun to ascertain the



number of Jewish residents with the help of complete censuses and sample surveys, and also by so-called indirect methods which involve the statistical manipulation of Yom Kippur absence data from public schools, communal death certificates, and city directories and voters lists.\* Since these local surveys employed as generous a definition of the term Jewish as did the Census Bureau, the results—for that reason at least—should not be too far apart. It is also significant that the *Year Book* estimate moved so closely to the sample survey figure only after a local sample study of New York City, and a death certificate survey of Chicago, had resulted in a downward revision of the Jewish populations there. Since over 45 per cent of the total Jewish population lives in these two urban areas (within the city limits) a change there must affect the estimate for the total Jewish population in a significant manner.

The Jewish population now constitutes three per cent of the total population of the United States. However, as everyone knows, it is not evenly distributed throughout the country. Rather, Jews are heavily concentrated in the northeastern region of the United States. According to the 1957 sample survey, 69.1 per cent of the Jewish population live in the Middle Atlantic states (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania) and in New England from Connecticut to

Maine. The North Central Region (better known as the Middle West) and the West each have about 11 per cent of the total while the remaining 7.7 per cent reside in the South. As will be seen from Table 1, the total white population is much more evenly distributed with the exception of the West where only 15 per cent of the total white population resides.

How does the regional distribution given by the Census Bureau compare with that obtained from the *American Jewish Year Book* data? As in the case of the total figure, the *Year Book* data are not far off: they deviate 2.5 per cent or less. They can thus be used to pinpoint the regional distribution of the Jewish population more exactly. This has been done in Table 2, from which it may be seen that the Jewish population is concentrated in three major areas. The most important cluster is the Atlantic Seaboard from Florida to Maine, where three-fourths of the Jewish community reside. The two minor clusters are California and the Great Lakes Region (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin). All other areas together contain the remainder (6.2 per cent) of the Jewish population of close on five million.

Table 1  
REGION OF RESIDENCE OF THE TOTAL  
WHITE AND THE JEWISH POPULATION  
MARCH 1957†

| REGION        | WHITE | JEWISH |
|---------------|-------|--------|
| United States | 100.0 | 100.0  |
| Northeast     | 27.3  | 69.1   |
| North Central | 30.1  | 11.9   |
| South         | 27.9  | 7.7    |
| West          | 14.7  | 11.3   |

\*For a detailed description of these various techniques, their advantages and shortcomings, see E. Rosenthal, "The Jewish Population of Chicago, Illinois," in *The Chicago Pinkas*, ed. by S. Rawidowicz, Chicago: College of Jewish Studies, 1952.

†Source: Current Population Reports Series P-20, No. 79, Table 2.

Table 2  
REGION OF RESIDENCE OF THE  
JEWISH POPULATION, SUMMER 1955\*\*

| REGION            | NUMBER    | Per cent |
|-------------------|-----------|----------|
| United States     | 4,975,000 | 100.0    |
| Atlantic Seaboard | 3,660,750 | 73.6     |
| New England       | 334,250   |          |
| Middle Atlantic   | 3,035,500 |          |
| South Atlantic    | 291,000   |          |
| West Coast        | 430,500   | 8.6      |
| California        | 430,500   |          |
| Great Lakes       | 576,750   | 11.6     |
| Ohio              | 153,000   |          |
| Indiana           | 22,000    |          |
| Illinois          | 280,000   |          |
| Michigan          | 83,750    |          |
| Wisconsin         | 38,000    |          |
| All other areas   | 307,000   | 6.2      |

Again, it would be a mistake to suppose that the Jewish community is evenly distributed within these regions of concentra-

\*\*Source: *American Jewish Year Book*, 1956, Vol. 57, p. 124.



tion. Rather, it is heavily concentrated in the larger urban areas. This finding of the sample survey must be considered its most important result; since other social characteristics, such as occupation, income, and fertility patterns, are directly determined by the fact that the American Jews are an urban people. The sample survey found (Table 3) that the Jewish population is so heavily concentrated in the larger urban areas that 87.4 per cent live in "urbanized areas" containing 250,000 residents or more. By contrast only about one-third of the total population, one-fourth of the white Protes-

will be heavily influenced by the social characteristics found in the Jewish population of New York City.

**L**ow fertility is beyond doubt the most outstanding trait of urban life. It also has the most far-reaching social consequences. Since the urban population fails to reproduce itself, most cities have set into motion large internal migrations from rural areas, supplemented in the United States by immigration from abroad. These migrations also furnish the power to keep the escalators of social mobility in continuous motion, up-

Table 3  
URBAN-RURAL RESIDENCE OF PERSONS 14 YEARS OLD AND OVER,  
BY RELIGION REPORTED, FOR THE UNITED STATES: MARCH 1957

| PER CENT BY RESIDENCE      | United States | U R B A N |                                    |             | Rural nonfarm | Rural farm |
|----------------------------|---------------|-----------|------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|
|                            |               | Total     | Urbanized areas of 250,000 or more | Other Urban |               |            |
| Total, 14 years old & over | 100.0         | 63.9      | 36.6                               | 27.3        | 24.4          | 11.7       |
| White Protestant           | 100.0         | 55.2      | 24.5                               | 30.7        | 30.1          | 14.7       |
| Roman Catholic             | 100.0         | 78.8      | 53.9                               | 24.9        | 15.8          | 5.4        |
| Jewish                     | 100.0         | 96.1      | 87.4                               | 8.7         | 3.6           | 0.2        |

tants, and one-half of the Roman Catholics are found there. An "urbanized area"—according to the Census Bureau's definition—is a central city of 50,000 or more inhabitants together with its suburban fringe. It may sound strange, but by using "urbanized areas of 250,000 or more" the Census Bureau still understates the degree of urbanization of the Jewish population. For, according to the *American Jewish Year Book*, approximately 70 per cent of the total Jewish population reside in the 13 largest cities of the country, i.e. those having more than 600,000 inhabitants. New York City of course contains the largest aggregation. According to a recent private sample survey undertaken by HIP (Health Insurance Plan) about two million Jews reside within the five boroughs of the city. In other words, about 40 per cent of the total Jewish population of the United States are concentrated in the largest city of the country. This means that any description of the total Jewish population

ward as well as downward. The specific pattern of fertility depends on the size of the city: *the larger the city, the lower the rate of reproduction*. This crucial fact was last observed in the analysis of the 1950 population census. Since 70 per cent of the Jewish population are located in the thirteen largest cities of the country, their fertility pattern can be expected to be low, and similar to that of the white population in these cities.

While urban residence is the major factor which influences fertility, occupation and income also co-determine the fertility pattern. According to a 1952 Census study, the wives of clerical workers, sales staff, and kindred employees had the lowest fertility, followed in ascending order by the professions and the group of managers, officials, and proprietors exclusive of farm operations. Industrial labor had a higher fertility, while the highest rate was achieved by farm labor, farm managers, and farm owners. The same

study also revealed that up to a figure of \$5,000 there was an inverse relationship between income and fertility. Now all the private surveys made of the Jewish population since the 30's point to a crucial fact, namely, that Jews are mostly concentrated in the clerical and sales field; then comes the function of managers, officials, and proprietors, and finally the professional personnel, a concentration precisely in those occupational fields where the fertility rate is lowest.\*

On the basis of the foregoing considerations the assumption is justified that the Jewish population has the lowest level of fertility within the white large-city population. Since fertility is directly reflected in the age composition, the validity of this assumption can be tested by analyzing the age distribution as revealed in the Census Bureau's Sample Survey of March 1957. A

cent of all Jews are found to be 35 years and older, as compared with 45 per cent of the Protestant and 42 per cent of the Catholic population. The figures for the child population under fourteen years of age indicate that Jews did not participate in the war and postwar baby boom as much as did the other groups. However, before entering upon more detailed comparisons of the age composition we should remember that we are comparing the most highly urbanized religious group with groups whose degree of urbanization is considerably smaller. If it were at all possible to rearrange the data in such a manner as to compare the three religious groups for high, medium, and low levels of urbanization separately, the differences between the Jewish population and the other groups might be reduced to a considerable extent. While this particular type of comparison is not possible at the present time, we are in

Table 4  
AGE COMPOSITION OF THE WHITE POPULATION, BY RELIGION  
REPORTED, FOR THE UNITED STATES, AND OF THE WHITE  
POPULATION OF NEW YORK CITY, 1957

| AGE       | Protestant | Roman Catholic | Jewish | New York City |
|-----------|------------|----------------|--------|---------------|
| Total     | 100.0      | 100.0          | 100.0  | 100.0         |
| Under 14  | 26.7       | 27.7           | 22.2   | 21.1          |
| 14-19     | 8.4        | 8.7            | 7.0    | 7.3           |
| 20-24     | 5.7        | 6.3            | 4.7    | 6.1           |
| 25-34     | 13.8       | 15.4           | 13.3   | 14.2          |
| 35-44     | 13.8       | 15.1           | 14.6   | 15.0          |
| 45-64     | 21.6       | 19.5           | 28.0   | 26.5          |
| 65 & over | 10.0       | 7.2            | 10.1   | 9.8           |

study of Table 4 shows that the urban way of life of the Jewish population is fully reflected in its age distribution. The Jewish community has a smaller proportion of young people than the white Protestant or the Roman Catholic population. Nearly 53 per

\*While the Jewish population of New York City is not quite as heavily concentrated in white collar occupations as is the Jewish group in other cities, a recent study of a sample of Brooklyn Jewish families revealed that the average size of the manual workers' families (2.32) was virtually identical with that of the white collar workers (2.28). In other words, the low fertility of the white collar workers is not compensated for by a larger fertility of the manual workers in the Jewish group.

the fortunate situation of being able to compare the age composition of the Jewish population with that of the total white population of New York City. Since the New York data were collected just one month after the sample survey was taken, the comparison of the age distributions should have a high degree of validity. Figures for the white population of New York City will be found in the last column of Table 4. It will be seen that the age composition of the Jewish population throughout the United States is nearly identical with that of the age composition of the white population of New York City. Although 60 per cent of the total Jew-



ish population resides outside of New York City, the age distribution of this group is of such a nature as though all of them were residing in New York and had adopted the New York City style of life. In other words, the Jewish population of the country is as urbanized as the total Jewish as well as non-Jewish population of New York City.

The analysis of age distribution discloses that the Jewish population—in the manner of large-city-folk—shows a very low fertility rate. While the white Protestant and the Roman Catholic groups can make up for their urban deficiencies from their rural surpluses the Jews do not have this opportunity; 9,000 Jews in rural farm areas, no matter what their fecundity, cannot begin to make up for the lack of natural increase in the city. But there is another way of securing the growth of a population: namely, through immigration from abroad.

Since the Federal government began to count Jewish immigrants in 1900 under the

twenty-one and a half million people, and of these, 2,200,000, or just about 10 per cent, were Jewish.

For reasons that are fairly obvious, these five and a half decades have been divided into five periods. Table 5 shows that about 80 per cent of all immigrants entered during the first quarter of the century whereas only 20 per cent of the total were admitted after 1925. The lowest ebb of Jewish immigration occurred between 1925 and 1932, that of the total population in the decade following. The rise of Hitler raised the proportion of Jewish immigrants to a third of all immigrants. Yet in spite of this relative rise, the average annual number of Jewish entrants was very small, reaching just above 15,000 during this critical phase of Jewish existence. Since 1943, the proportion has dropped to less than 10 per cent of all immigrants. The 150,000 Jewish immigrants who entered this country between 1944 and the end of 1954 constitute about 3 per cent of the total Jew-

Table 5  
TOTAL AND JEWISH IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES  
1900-1954

| PERIOD | FISCAL YEAR† | IMMIGRANTS TO THE U.S.A.* |       |           |       | AVERAGE ANNUAL<br>NUMBER OF JEWISH<br>IMMIGRANTS |
|--------|--------------|---------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|--------------------------------------------------|
|        |              | ALL                       |       | JEWISH    |       |                                                  |
|        |              | NUMBER                    | %     | NUMBER    | %     |                                                  |
| I      | 1900-1914    | 13,377,089                | 62.2  | 1,448,226 | 65.9  | 96,548                                           |
| II     | 1915-1924    | 3,947,279                 | 18.4  | 352,234   | 16.0  | 35,223                                           |
| III    | 1925-1932    | 1,895,325                 | 8.8   | 76,133    | 3.5   | 9,517                                            |
| IV     | 1933-1943    | 499,998                   | 2.3   | 168,128   | 7.6   | 15,284                                           |
| V      | 1944-1954    | 1,780,605                 | 8.3   | 151,859   | 6.9   | 13,805                                           |
|        | 1900-1954    | 21,500,296                | 100.0 | 2,196,580 | 100.0 | 39,938                                           |

classification of "Hebrew race" (a practice discontinued in 1943) we are in a fairly good position to show just how much immigration has contributed to the growth of the Jewish population in the United States. Between 1900 and 1954 the total number of all immigrants to America amounted to

ish population. By now the reservoir of potential Jewish immigration from overseas has been almost exhausted, but as recent events have shown, it has not completely dried up. In the year following the Hungarian revolution of October 1956, nearly 4,900 Jewish refugees from Hungary were admitted to the United States. However, when at about the same time 20,000 Egyptian Jews were made homeless, the existing quota restriction made it virtually impossible to admit any to the United States.\*\*

\*The data for the years 1900-1943 are from "Jewish Migrations During the Last Hundred Years," by L. Hersch, *The Jewish People Past and Present*, vol. 1, p. 409; the data for the Jewish immigration 1944-1954 are from Henry Cohen, *Jewish Population Trends in New York City, 1940-1970*, p. 2. New York: Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, January 1956.

†From July 1 of the preceding year to June 30 of the year stated.

\*\*According to the *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 59 (1958), HIAS was able to help only 24 persons from Egypt enter the U.S.



THE size of the Jewish population is further influenced by the occurrence of mixed marriages, and by conversions from and to Judaism. In order to collect and analyze statistical data concerning intermarriage the following terminology has been adopted: the term *intermarriage* refers to a marriage across religious lines. The term *mixed marriage* refers to a particular case of intermarriage. If each partner to the marriage retains his earlier religious identification, the family is termed a *mixed family*. It should be clear that with this set of definitions it is not possible to distinguish those cases in which one of the partners changed his religion to conform to that of the spouse. Within this framework of definitions the Census Bureau's Sample Survey found a *mixed family* ratio of 7.2 per cent in the Jewish population of the country. In other words, for couples in which one spouse was reported as Jewish, 7.2 per cent of the husbands or wives were reported as Protestant or Roman Catholic. The Bureau in its introductory comments to the release points out that "the enumerators were instructed not to assume that all members of a family have the same religion, but it is possible that this instruction may have been overlooked in some cases."

From this remark it appears that the Bureau considers this set of data minimum figures. This writer knows of only three studies—undertaken under private auspices—which contain data on the extent of intermarriage. The findings of two of them confirm the census results. Samuel Koenig, in a study of Stamford, Conn., in 1938, found the percentage of intermarried couples to be 7.2 per cent. Alvin Chenkin, in his study of New Orleans in 1953, found that 7 per cent of all Jewish families were intermarried. However, a recent study of *The Jewish Population of Greater Washington (D.C.)* in 1956 (sponsored by the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington and directed by Stanley K. Bigman) found that 11.4 per cent of all Jewish families had a non-Jewish spouse. Among several possible reasons which could be advanced to explain

the larger share of mixed families in and around the District of Columbia, Bigman had reason to believe that the sampling method was responsible for the discovery of a larger share of mixed families. In view of the fact that the sample survey of the Census revealed a lower percentage, the reason for the higher rate must be sought elsewhere. Bigman—like previous students—found that more Jewish men than women are involved in mixed families. So are persons with considerable formal education, professional status, and native-born persons of native parentage. An analysis of the spatial distribution of these mixed families showed that they are anything but evenly distributed over Greater Washington. Their preferred area of settlement are the Virginia suburbs, which in another part of the survey are identified as having the highest proportion of Jewish in-migrants from small towns. It is the factor of small-town background rather than the sampling technique which will most likely explain the higher rate of intermarriage in Washington, D.C.\*

This finding of small-town background and voluntary residential segregation must be linked with what is perhaps the most interesting finding of the Washington Survey: for many persons the involvement in a mixed family is not a new experience. One-fifth of the intermarried were themselves products of a mixed family, as compared to less than one per cent in all-Jewish households. Many persons so involved had siblings and other relatives who were also partners to mixed families. For half of the Jewish men married to non-Jewish wives, however, this was the first experience. This set of facts leads to some interesting sociological speculations: Under the influence of the concepts of "assimilation" and "amalgamation" we generally assume that a Jewish person who marries outside the group leaves it to disappear in the non-Jewish population or in the all-

\*A correlation between small-town background and high propensity for intermarriage was first suggested by Hershel Shanks in his article, "Jewish-Gentile Intermarriage: Facts and Trends," COMMENTARY, October 1953.



American environment. The Washington data, however, seem to suggest that the Jewish group is a core around which mixed families and persons of mixed parentage orbit. The course that these people take sometimes increases and at other times narrows their distance from the nucleus of the purely Jewish group. In the long run, however, it seems that a good portion of the children of mixed families will escape their marginal status and will be incorporated in the majority groups. The Washington data show that in 66 per cent of the families the children are not being reared as Jews, while in 25 per cent of the families they are so brought up. In nearly 9 per cent of the families at least one child is reared as a Jew, while another is brought up as a Gentile. At the present time there is no way of telling whether "being reared as a Jew" means anything more than being conscious of having a Jewish background.\*

Intermarriage, then, it would appear from the Washington data, will in the long run contribute to a decline in the size of the Jewish population. However, this loss may be partially compensated for by conversions to Judaism at the occasion of a Gentile's marriage to a Jewish spouse. In 1953, Rabbi David M. Eichhorn undertook a survey to determine the number of converts to Judaism. He found that between 1948 and 1953, the Reform and Conservative rabbis were annually converting between 1,500 and 1,750 persons to Judaism. (There are no data available on the number converted by Orthodox rabbis.) Over 80 per cent of the converts were women. It is estimated that more than 60 per cent of the proselytes have joined a Reform or a Conservative congregation. It is also estimated that at least 80 per cent of the proselytes raise their children as Jews. Since we have dealt in some detail with the phenomenon of mixed marriage in Washington, D.C., it may be of interest to point out that the Washington Hebrew

\*The Washington data should be analyzed in greater detail and depth if the ways and means can be found. Unfortunately, Jewish social research has no fund appeal and barely manages to keep alive.

Congregation in Washington, D.C., reported the second largest number of proselyte members: 112; it is followed by Beth Ahaba in Richmond, Va., which has 80 such members. The Washington Hebrew Congregation is, however, outnumbered by B'nai Israel of Little Rock, Ark., which reported 189 such members. Recent over-all figures concerning the number of Jewish converts to Christianity seem to be unavailable.†

**B**IRTHS and deaths, migrations, mixed marriages and conversions, are the basic facts out of which the demography of a religious group must be constructed. What have we found? First of all, we are now in a position to assert that, as of March 1957, the Jewish population was just below the five million mark and the proportion of intermarried families 7.2 per cent of all Jewish families. Even though nearly identical figures had been available before, they had to be labeled as best estimates or informed guesses. The private survey of the Jewish population of the District of Columbia revealed that—to judge by the religious training of children in mixed families—the current loss from such unions is about 5 per cent per generation. This attrition is counterbalanced by the conversion of non-Jewish persons to Judaism, mainly on the occasion of their marriage to a Jewish partner. In recent years this influx amounted to an estimated minimum of 1,500 persons annually. Since we do not know the total number of such conversions, nor the number of Jews who are baptized, we cannot determine the net loss or gain.

We have also seen that the Jewish population of the United States did not participate in the war and postwar baby boom to the same extent as did the Protestant and

†A recent communication (June 1958) from the Reverend L. W. Halvorsen, Area Secretary of the National Lutheran Council informed me that as of March 1958, 86 affiliated Lutheran congregations in New York reported a Jewish membership of 258 adults and 17 children, and that in the last 5 years 146 persons were converted. In Philadelphia, 33 congregations reported a membership of 81 Jewish persons and the number of conversions in the last five years as 53.



Roman Catholic population. The heavy degree of urbanization, the heavy concentration of the Jewish population in the most urbanized area of the country, together with its rather one-sided occupational distribution, are factors which do not favor population growth.

Meanwhile the contribution of migration from abroad to the growth of the Jewish population in the United States has become successively smaller as the 20th century progressed. From an annual average of about 100,000 at the turn of the century the number of immigrants has declined to about 14,000. At the present time the future role of Jewish immigration is not certain, but it is unlikely that the current level of immigration will be substantially exceeded.

The demographic picture cannot be considered complete until the community's fu-

ture size—its probable growth or decline—has been discussed. This must wait until such time as we can obtain a set of data from which to construct death rates for the total Jewish population of the country. (Because of the high mobility, particularly of the older age groups, any local area rate is subject to considerable error.) If the death rate should be lower than that of the white Protestant and Roman Catholic population—as was found to be the case in the 30's—the Jewish population is probably maintaining its size, although Jewish births have lagged behind. In the absence of such information we have to rely on what the data on the current age distribution tell us: they indicate a slow-down in the natural growth of the Jewish population which, if continued for another generation, could give cause for concern about the future.

## THE PATRIARCH

SARAH SINGER

THEY pay him court, the weekly clan,  
Solemn with Sunday thought and deed,  
The filial and duteous breed  
Grown alien, an immeasured span  
Between them and his need.

Asunder now, they would rephrase  
Their lost affinities, the blurred  
And ancient ties with gift and word.  
The old man nods, his earthless gaze  
Ancestral and unstirred.

Abstracted, spelled beyond their reach,  
Beyond solicitude or sting,  
He hears finality as fling  
And rasp of leaf portend for each  
The climate of unbeing.

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SARAH SINGER was born in New York City in 1920. This is her first contribution to COMMENTARY.